

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A method of conducting a survey, said method comprising:
for at least one question in said survey, establishing a bin for each of a possible response to said question; ~~and~~

for each said bin, establishing a perturbing mechanism that perturbs a content of said bin, said perturbing mechanism having a statistical parameter with a known value;

generating a perturbed indicator vector that represents a respondent's response for said question, said perturbed indicator vector comprising an information structure including the contents of all bins of said question after each of the bins has been perturbed and said respondent has selected one or more said possible responses, wherein said perturbing mechanism comprises a random number generator and said known statistical parameter value comprises a mean value of said random number generator, wherein said generating the perturbed indicator vector comprises respectively adding numbers from the perturbing mechanism to the contents of the bins;

if contents of a bin exceeds an upper bound after perturbation, said contents are clamped to said upper bound;

if contents of a bins are below a lower bound after perturbation, said contents are clamped to said lower bound;

at least one of:

setting up a survey question by generating a medium with a plurality of markable areas for each possible response and pre-marking a random number of said markable areas for each said possible response; and

having a respondent respond to the survey question by adding a mark to any of remaining non pre-marked markable areas, if any markable areas remain after said pre-marking, of the plurality of markable areas for the possible response that corresponds to a desired response to the question;

generating a perturbed indicator vector by counting the number of marked areas for each response; and

for a plurality of responses for a question in said survey, analyzing the bins in said perturbed indicator vector to provide an estimation of a distribution of responses, wherein said analyzing comprises:

for said question being analyzed, calculating an average of each perturbed bin in said question, wherein said perturbing mechanism comprises a random number generator and said known statistical parameter comprises a mean value, said analyzing further comprising for each said perturbed bin in said question, subtracting said mean value of said perturbing mechanism associated with said bin.

2-27. (Canceled)